

Orphans Project



Here we present a summary of our activities
in the Orphans Project in 2023

Successes...
Challenges...
Discoveries...

and new plans for 2024!

Aquidauana
Mato Grosso do Sul
Brazil

February
2024





Firstly, we would like to introduce you to the orphans under our care in 2023

Orphans Project



Cecília



Darlan



Fadinha



Bento



Aurora



Joey



Joaquin



Tupã



Vênus



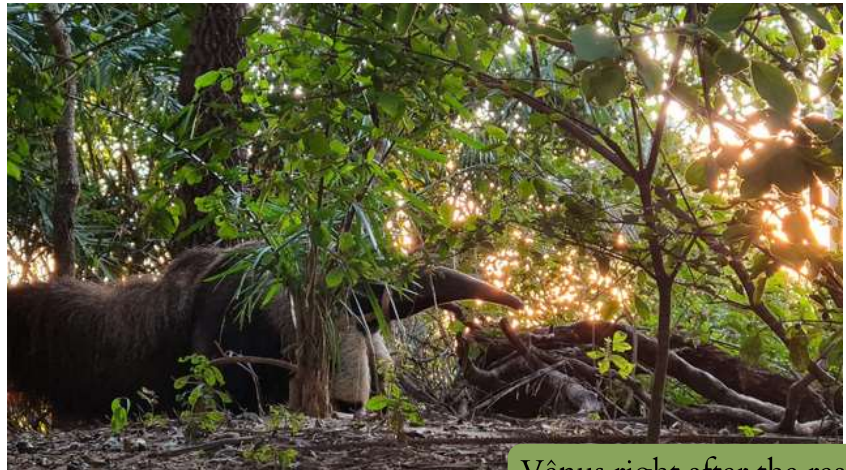
Tunga



Orphans Project

January

We started 2023 with lots of activities! In January, we collected biological samples from 8 free-living individuals, and three of our orphans (Darlan, Cecília, and Vênus) were considered fit to return to the wild received the GPS vest.



Vênus right after the release

We also monitored Tupã and Joaquin, two individuals already reintroduced and in the process of adaptation.



Joaquin free



Orphans Project

February

On February 4th, Darlan and Cecília gained their freedom! And our entire team was very excited about it.



Cecília , during the second day of the monitoring in the wild

Our team also went to Bonito/Mato Grosso do Sul, where another orphan, Aurora, was in the care of partners, and also received her GPS vest to soon be reintroduced.



Aurora already with her GPS vest

The released individuals were monitored throughout the month. Darlan moved around the farm for a while. Cecília, on the other hand, explored more distant areas, traveling a lot in that first month.



Orphans Project

March

We sedated Darlan for weight measurements. And great news! He did not lose much weight and appeared to be healthy.

But Cecília had some problems. She was staying in a neighboring farm whose owner resisted letting us monitor her there. After a long conversation, we finally got his authorization.

We found Cecília sleeping in a small wooded area, but we observed some wounds on her body. We decided to sedate her for a better evaluation, and she was medicated that day.

After 48 hours, we returned for observation. However, more wounds appeared, and we had to capture Cecília to return her to captivity for treatment and exams.



Many wounds on Cecília's body, on the day of her rescue

Tupã, the first reintroduced orphan, completed almost 2 years of monitoring! So, we removed his GPS vest. He represents our first success in giant anteater reintroduction and does not need any more human care.



Tupã, on the day we removed his GPS vest. So exciting day!



Orphans Project

April

In March and April, Cecília was under intense care, which led to her complete recovery despite the severity of her condition.

Tereré was sent to the pre-release captivity, the last stage before freedom! And Tunga received her GPS vest.



Tereré in the immersion and Tunga with the GPS vest

Aurora and Joey have been reintroduced!



Aurora in the first steps in freedom

After 6 months in the wild, Joaquin lost a lot of weight. So, he had to return to captivity momentarily.



Orphans Project

May

What a tough month!!

Terere received his GPS vest.

Darlan was found with neurological symptoms, lying on his side, and had to be returned to captivity.



Darlan, in the day of his rescue, lying down, unable to get up

Aurora was found dead! Her necropsy and test results indicated contamination by pesticides. We were devastated!



Aurora, observed feeding, a week before her death

Some of the substances found are illegal in Brazil. We are looking for more information and legal support in this situation.

But the good news was that in May, Vênus was released!



Orphans Project

June

Tunga received her freedom in the first week of June.



Tunga leaving the enclosure

Darlan has made a good recovery, but so far, no tests have identified the cause of his illness.

Suddenly, Joey was found very weak... He was rescued and returned to captivity, too.



Joey, at the time of his rescue

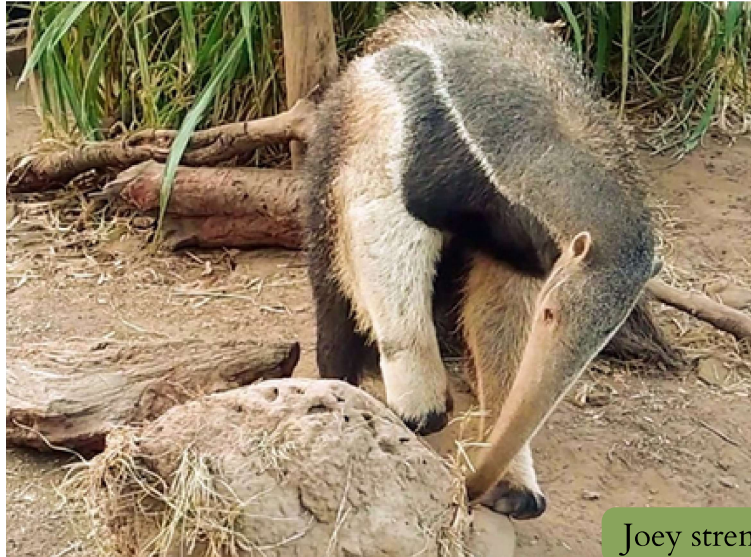
At the end of the month, we sedated Tunga and Vênus while they were free to check their weight and health conditions. Both lost weight (what is expected) but were doing well.



Orphans Project

July

Despite the severity of the condition upon his rescue, Joey had a good recovery!



Joey strengthened,
eating termites

Joaquin was again transferred to the immersion enclosure, regained weight, and responded very well to the treatment.

All animals monitored in the wild and in captivity are doing well!



Joaquin in the immersion
enclosure



Orphans Project

August

All the animals were fine!

However, Venus began to get very close to humans. Therefore, we transferred her to an area within the Farm where our base is, but further away.

After that, Venus moved a lot, choosing an area 20 km away from our base to settle. But we continued to monitor her.



Venus receiving feeding while being observed by the team



Venus walked a lot in August, and was even caught crossing a river



Orphans Project

September

In the first week of September, another loss... We lost Venus' GPS signal for a few days, so our team hurried to the area where she was. Unfortunately, she was found dead, and the cause could not be determined.

And another challenge: Tunga lost a substantial weight! We sedated her and did some tests. Then, our team provided daily food and vitamins in the field. And the approach was a success! Tunga began to get stronger, gain weight, and did not need to return to captivity. Also, we saw her interacting with another free-living individual.



Tunga interacting aggressively with another free-living individual

Also, that month, Tereré was released, and Fadinha was transferred to the immersion enclosure.



Tereré being released



Orphans Project

October

Tunga kept improving! But Tereré lost weight, too. He was sedated and his vest was adjusted.

So, we started a new approach: we placed small feeders, monitored by trap cameras, to supplement animals that lost weight and minimize contact with humans. And it is a success!



Terere in one of the feeders

Trovão was released!

And Cecília returned to the immersion enclosure for further preparation for the release process.



Trovão was released!



Test results came out: Cecília and Joey had a viral disease originating in domestic dogs, the distemper disease! This virus causes severe conditions in several wild animals.



Orphans Project

November

The animals were doing well! But Pantanal was burning again! The situation only improved after the rains at the end of the month.



None of our animals were affected. However, the fire came very close, and smoke covered the entire area



Tunga in free life, recorded by camera trap

We lured Tereré into captivity after the team noticed weakness. Tereré stayed there for 10 days to receive supplements and get health tests until he was released.



Orphans Project

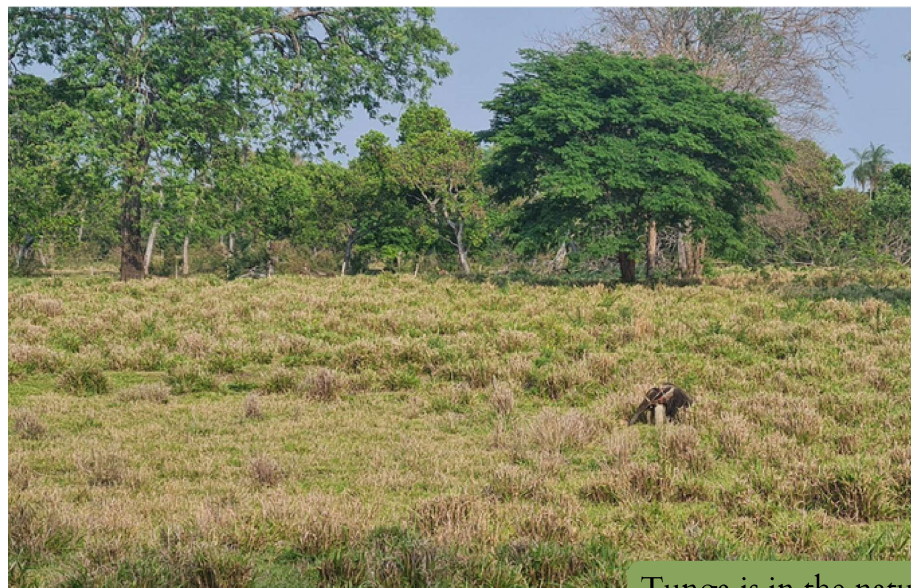
December

Trovão was sedated to adjust his vest! Despite the weight loss, his body score was adequate. And its foraging behavior is excellent, frequently seeing feeding in the fields in the morning.

Tunga and Terere were in good health.



Trovão forraging



Tunga is in the nature for 6 months!

Orphans Project



2023 was an intense year! And demonstrated that a free life is hard! Among successes and losses, we learned a lot, improved our techniques, reinforced the importance of monitoring after release, and are hopeful about establishing a protocol for reintroducing this magnificent and in risk to extinction species. And for all this to be done, the contribution of each funder is essential.

We intend that all animals will be free-living in the first months of 2024. And then, we will be able to welcome new individuals, who will have an opportunity to return to the wild where they should never have left.

